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Mary the Merry  
and Other Tales



LEO ROBBINS



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# MARY *the* MERRY and OTHER TALES

BY  
LEO ROBBINS

THE STRATFORD COMPANY

::        ::        Publishers        ::        ::

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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Copyright 1918  
The STRATFORD CO., Publishers  
Boston, Mass.

The Alpine Press, Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

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## Mary the Merry

WERE this a play, for which I wished to assure a long run on the stage, I might have called it the "Shocking Stocking," or "The Naked Woman," or "Two Bedrooms in One Bed," perhaps. Were it a magazine serial I could have named it "The Matchless Match," or "The Sinning Sex," or with greater success, "The Seventh Commandment." Again, were it a detective story, I most probably would christen it, "Ten Murders for Ten Cents," "The Invisible Visible," or "The Stain on the Tail of the World." But, as it is only a plain story of a plain girl, in a plain world, and for plain people—therefore, be it known simply as "Mary the Merry."

For the story of Mary the Merry it is. And Mary the Merry was neither the Vampire-woman nor the ethereal creature that one sees on the stage, nor the Champagne girl of the Novel or the Veiled woman in the Detective story. Mary was the daughter of a certain Steve Egbers, who worked six days at the National Woolen Mills, and on the seventh day, which is Sabbath, he rested from his labor,—at "Noah's Ark," an institution managed by a man whose Christian name was Noah, but who was better known as "Red Kelly." And Noah's Ark was ever floating upon the waters prevailing upon the earth by the wrath of God, and known as Alcohol.

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Wherefore, Mary's mother spoke the one language known all over the face of the earth, and termed curses by God and Man, and submerged Mary's home in a deluge of tears. And yet more blessings knew Mary in her home. For on the Sabbath evenings when the Man, Steve Egbers, returned to his cave, and the disposition of Lot was his — then did the blessings of Sodom and Gomorrah pour forth upon him from the lips of the "bone of his bones," and then it was that the temple of the home was often scattered even like the tower of Babel.

And hath not God bidden mankind to increase and multiply? Behold in Steve Egbers the God-fearing and abiding! For eight little pairs of shoes had he to create in the six days of Creation, and eight little mouths squeaked on Sabbath Eve, in chorus with their mother's bitter welcome to their provider. Nay, we cannot know the number which the tribe of Egbers might reach to in time.

Yet was Mary, the oldest-born, Mary the Merry. And this designation she fully deserved by virtue of her nature. Just how she could laugh, and hop and dance when her parents squabbled and fought, God knows, but this much we, puny mortals, may know; that not for no reason was Mary called Mary the Merry

Now, you most certainly have read that fascinating book about a lame little boy, who was always happy and made others happy. Well, then, do you remember that there were also a poor rich lady and a miserable

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rich man who, that book said, came to know sunshine through the happy little boy, for which they made him really happy? If you remember that, I say, you already have the drift of my story.

For the poor rich may be debarred from the realms of happiness, but when they see its hue they know to appreciate it. As has been said once too often, many a rose would have died untouched if not for the bee. . . .

Which, however, must not take us away from our story. It is for mere atmosphere, probably, that I happen to bring in these sweet elements. But now, for the sake of a little symbolism let us take the conclusion of the story of Mary the Merry, and see if you could discover all these elements there.

Mary the Merry, like her father, worked at the great National institution, I mean the Woolen Mills. And when Mary was seventeen she had been there for four years.

Four years' time should afford many a chance to laugh and shout and dance! Ay, four years' time should afford a great deal of dreaming for a girl like Mary. But it happened that Mary would sometimes forget herself for a minute, and stand staring before her blankly. And then it happened that Mary could not laugh so often and so whimsically. . . .

What could Mary see in such instances? The vision was not always the same. But invariably there was a big automobile, a rich, carpeted room, and laughter, laughter, laughter. . . .



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At such times there was a droop noticeable in Mary the Merry. The Merry Mary was longing. And it took long before at last there appeared to her an angel of mercy to realize her dreams. And he was a young angel, and pleasant to look upon.

In some of those hasty novels he would be portrayed as a devil in disguise.

He had something to do in the management of the Mills, and he liked Mary the first time he saw her. He was very kind, and the first thing he said to her was that she was the merriest little girl he had ever seen. And he had seen a lot. People had heard of him before, and seen his picture in the papers alongside the beautiful faces of a half-dozen chorus girls. Then it was, that once, Mary spoke to him of her dreams, and he saw tears in her pretty eyes, and there was a little flash of fire in his own, and he said that he would see her dreams realized. And one evening — it was a fine evening — she waited at a certain corner for his automobile, and he came along, and she hopped in, and the car sped off, she leaning back in the soft seat, throbbing with pleasure.

He had the good-time all arranged for her. A distance from the city, at the Richwood Inn, a good supper with wine was awaiting them. They were speeding.

But they never reached the inn. There was a crash, a scream, and a flare of fire. And little Mary the Merry never saw her dreams realized. . . .

Still, essentially, Mary's dream came true. The

## MARY THE MERRY

newspapers in the morning could not have it otherwise but that the treasurer of the National Woolen Mills was killed in an automobile accident, while motoring with a friend of the family, Miss Mary Egbers, well known in Society circles. The girl's body was pinned under the ruins of the car, and badly mutilated.

This is the story of Mary the Merry It might have been worse had she reached the inn with the man. . . .





## And Yet —

**A**T last the judge leaned forward, over his desk, and asked the question, so unavoidable in the case before him, and yet so hard, so unpleasant for the lawyers to put before the shy, humiliated woman on the witness stand.

“But how,” he said in his kindest tones, “did you happen to find yourself in the same taxi with the defendant?”

The young woman blushed. A deep, timorous red mantled her beautiful face. It was the climax of her mortification, what she was expecting, and yet so hard to bear. But she was ready in her penitence to stand on the pillory and have her shame unveiled that she might be purged. She twitched the little handkerchief between her fingers. A sob was bubbling up in her throat, escaping her; she pressed her lips tighter.

The silence in the court room was so intense that it seemed ready to crack. The judge remained in his position, his lips still parted.

Slowly she turned her eyes upon her husband, the man who loved her, the man against whom she had sinned. His awkward little body was suspended forward, his lumpy, knotted face rigid with expectation; his eyes, seemingly frozen in their sockets, were on her. They were full of love, clemency, forgiveness.

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Without moving her head she saw the other man, her assailant. He was leaning back in his seat complacently. His splendid body, with the creased trousers, patent shoes, lightly stretched forward, seemed to be lounging on the bench, rather than sitting. His hair, combed back, flashed a streak of lustre. His chin, slightly pointed, threw a ribbon of shade on his immaculate modish collar and silk cravat. He was grinning cynically.

She dropped her eyes to her lap, closed them for an instant, then began:

“I hope you will understand,” she said. Every one in the room breathed. Her voice was sweet and firm. “I shall tell my story here before my husband, before all the strangers—before all the world. I know that my heart will feel lighter then.”

She flushed anew, her voice grew deep with emotion. She continued:

“I never meant to be untrue to my husband—may God punish me if I did! I swear here before you all that I never was untrue to him. He loves me, I know that. He has given me everything I desired. I respect him. I—I love him!”

The lawyer for the defence coughed. She drew the end of her handkerchief across one eye, then the other, and resumed.

“But I didn’t have enough friends, I think. My husband is hardly ever home. I know very few people in this city. Occasionally, I used to dress up in the morning and go shopping for the day. I’d walk

## AND YET —

through the department-stores until my feet ached, then return home. But I hate the store counters. I hate the asking of prices and salesgirls' faces. Most of the time I'd plant myself at the window, sit there all day long, and watch the street.

"I used to think an awful lot. I was afraid I'd lose my mind thinking. Lately (she lowered her voice) I came to thinking of — suicide."

The grotesque, anxious face of her husband twitched with pain. The judge bit his lip. The defendant alone was unmoved.

"Then I began noticing this — this man. Each noon-time he would appear out of one end of the street and walk slowly by. Just when I first noticed him I don't know myself. But once I noticed him especially in the crowd — I don't know why. When he appeared the next day, I at once distinguished him from the rest of the people. I watched for him every day after that, and each time he walked by I felt as if meeting a friend. I — I missed him one day when he did not appear. I'm afraid I was waiting for him anxiously every day."

She was conscious of the young man's cynical grin. His wilful eyes, focussed on her face, burned her like through a magnifying glass.

"One day when he passed by I was holding a flower. I dropped it — by accident. It fell upon his hat, and he stopped. I saw him take it in his hand and looking up at my window. He tucked the flower



## AND YET —

into his lapel, lifted his hat to me, and smiled. I fled from the window; I was ashamed of myself.

“I could not forgive myself for many days.

“But somehow I was drawn to the window. I used to hide behind the curtains every time he passed. I saw him look up each time.

“Then I got so lonesome I didn’t know what to do with myself. I could no longer even sit at the window. The greater a multitude I saw on the street the lonelier I grew. I couldn’t sit in one place for a minute. I couldn’t eat, I couldn’t sleep. I felt like strangling myself. . . .

“On the street was streaming by such a mass, a great sea of people, and no one cared for me, no one had a thought for me. No one knew I was so lonesome, so near. He alone would look up at my window and expect me. . . .

“‘My friend!’ I exclaimed many times behind the curtains when I saw him raise his eyes to my window.”

She was crying now, but mastered herself immediately.

“One day I was so desperate that I was ready to call him up. I didn’t dare.

“I decided I must get out of the house, get some recreation, excitement. My husband had always begged me to enjoy myself the best I could; but I had never cared to go out alone.

“That evening I insisted that he go out with me to some cabaret or other. He was surprised at first, I

## AND YET —

think. But he was very tired, he said. He would only go to oblige me, and this I could not bear. I cried and refused to answer him or talk to him.

“He went to bed early. I was already in my bed, sobbing. He tried to soothe me, and only succeeded in getting me furious. I brought all the jewels he had bought me and threw them in his face. I didn’t want his jewels when I couldn’t wear them.

“I know that I caused him pain. I am sorry now.”

Her husband gasped. The defendant laughed aloud.

“He fell asleep soon. I stopped crying. I was enraged by his sleep. How could he sleep, I thought, when I was so miserable!

“Suddenly a notion came to me. I ran to the mirror, arranged my hair, my face, put on my best gown, gathered all my scattered jewels on my body. I had three hundred dollars in a drawer. I took that, and stole out of the house.

“On the street I called a taxi, and told the chauffeur to take me to the best café in the city.”

Even on the refined face of the judge the expression was that of piquant curiosity.

“The place was a turmoil of mirth and light. I felt so reckless that I was surprised at myself. Sitting alone at my table, I caught a glimpse of myself in one of the mirrors. I was the richest-looking there.

“A man was trying to get my attention from a nearby table. It was he, the young man for whom

## AND YET —

I had been watching daily at my window — the only man in the multitude who knew that I existed.

“I was confused at first, then I nodded and smiled. He came over to my table and pressed my hand.”

She was silent for a minute. She seemed to gather new strength. Presently, her eyes still on her lap, she went on:

“I didn’t even ask his name. But I had the loveliest time of my life. I love dancing, and I never enjoyed my dancing so much. I simply didn’t know what I was doing.”

“Nothing rough?” interrupted one of the attorneys.

“No, no,” she replied. “He was the most gentlemanly man I ever met. I haven’t met many men, but ——”

“You may proceed with your story, please,” said the judge, scowling at the lawyer for the interruption.

“Well,” she resumed, “later in the evening I suddenly remembered what I had done, and what my husband might think of me if he found out my absence. I was anxious to be home again. He insisted that I must let him escort me. At first I didn’t give in; I always had a fear of sitting with a man other than my husband in a car, but he was so persistent, and he had meant so much to me that evening, that I simply couldn’t be rude to him.”

She ceased talking and pulled her handkerchief

## AND YET —

more nervously. She had reached the strategic point in her story, where it was hardest for her to talk. Finally, with an effort she resumed, her voice vibrant in accordance with her tale.

“We got into a taxi and drove for my home. I felt guilty, apprehensive, and dejected. He tried to cheer me up. My ill humor was already melting, when suddenly I felt his hand unbuckling my bracelet. I grasped him by the sleeve, but he threw himself upon me and was choking me. I struggled. I bit his hand, I kicked, I clenched my fingers, so that he couldn’t take the rings off. He hit me in the face with his fist. I felt blood running from my mouth and nose. Still I struggled on. . . .

“I felt I was going to faint. He was strangling me. I kicked at the door. There was a crash of glass. The car stopped.

“He cursed and began tearing my earrings. It pained — I screamed — I —— ”

She had got up from her seat entranced with the vividness of her terrible experience, re-enacting it deliriously. But before she came to a close she collapsed, her arms falling limp across the railing.

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The trial was resumed in the afternoon session. The chance visitors to court clung to their seats, unlike the usual court recesses. The woman was again composed, sitting beside her uncouth husband. He was called upon to testify, and he eagerly assured the



## AND YET —

judge that his wife was not the kind that is apt to go astray. In his meek way, he said something about himself being a criminal, and an example to other negligent husbands.

The chauffeur recognized the defendant as the man he had in his car with the lady on the night in question. He said that he stopped his car when he heard the crash of glass behind him.

A police officer testified how he was attracted by the screams of a woman in a taxi, and how he ran four blocks in pursuit of the assailant before he caught him.

This was followed by the report from the ambulance doctor of the Emergency Hospital.

"Upon examination," he said, "I have found two front teeth knocked out, and one molar. Arms badly scratched; throat bruised in six places.

"The lobe of the left ear brutally torn away."

Unconsciously all eyes rested on the ear of the mortified woman. The bandage had been recently removed and the wound was still raw. Compared with her beautiful features, even the sight of it was brutal.

From police records it was established that the defendant, Jerome Bowden, known in the white light districts as "Jerry Bow", was one of the champion male parasites who forever haunt the pleasure dens of the city. There are many like him at large in the city, the judge said, preying upon the rich women who once or often visit the gay districts. They are all of magnetic charm, elegant manners, and winning

## AND YET —

ways. If only all this man's victims were to enter their complaints, God knows how many family tragedies we might have.

"Nine months at hard labor!" he pronounced sentence.

The prisoner was being led out by the court officer. He stepped nimbly, carelessly. Passing by the woman's chair, he deliberately brushed his arm against her. Her husband instinctively drew her closer to him. But she did not shrink from the criminal's touch. She sat at her husband's side, following with yearning, wistful eyes the lithe figure of the young man moving away from her. . . .



## Pedigree

**W**HEN Hogerman, the rich silk manufacturer, married his wife, he knew her tragic life story.

She had told him even while he was wooing her that she was a foundling, cast upon the streets of London when two weeks old. Indeed, she had related to him how she had been raised in an institution until her tenth year, and then given into the service of a land-owner's kitchen, where she worked for the next seven years, and saved up enough to carry her to America. Fortunately, upon arriving in the free country, she got a job in the Hogerman shops. There the proprietor laid eyes on her, and soon married her.

He was not so rich then, widowed twice, and forty-three. In the shop he wore a brown derby, rambled about in an old woolen vest, and did all the floor-work himself. The girl was used to masters, and he sensed it the first day she came in to work for him. This, in addition to her good looks,—a taste for which he had cultivated probably in his selection of patterns,—were exactly the qualities he required of his wife.

She accepted him, and was envied by the shop girls. To be sure, she was not exactly happy. But she had little time to consider it before the wedding, and much less after. She became mistress



## PEDIGREE

of a fairly large house, and nurse to a round half-dozen children from his deceased wives. She gave Mr. Hogerman satisfaction and strengthened his self-assurance that he invariably knew what he was doing.

In the few years following their marriage, his wealth doubled, and his mercantile dominions increased. He grew less stingy in his household, and his wife went buying to the market in a limousine. This epoch was marked by the birth of a child — a boy.

Now, sometimes as people grow rich they grow romantic. Hogerman soon came to suffer these effects. He no longer did any manual work in the shop, and sometimes read a newspaper in the dull office hours. Occasionally, he told his wife to dress, and they rode in their automobile to a show. Movies he liked best, and he fell into the habit of seeing a picture show once a week. His wife did not care so much for the photodrama, could not sit through a show after her day's hustling about the house without falling asleep, but she always had to go along.

And on the screen a lost, deserted child is as common as insurance agents in this world, or as movie shows themselves, for that matter. When watching such plays, Mrs. Hogerman invariably cried, and Hogerman inwardly sympathized with her.

However, on the screen, all the lost, deserted children were sooner or later reclaimed by their parents. Why was not his wife? Furthermore, these parents were always lords, princes and kings. Was it not possible that his wife, too, was of noble blood?

## PEDIGREE

His son might be heir to a lordship if his wife's parentage were known.

He reflected on his wife's qualities. "Sometimes I do think you have noble blood in you," he commented once casually. She cried from happiness, took his hairy hand, brushed her cheek against it and kissed it. He experienced a thrill he had been craving for during all these years of his mastery over the shops.

Then he decided to make an attempt at unveiling her identity. He saw his lawyer on the matter, and the lawyer mailed a formal inquiry to the institution at which the girl had been raised.

He meant to save the developments as a surprise for her, but could not resist telling her of his efforts the same evening. She sobbed all night. Hogerman was sorry for that — his sleep was disturbed. But he did not scold her. On the contrary, he appreciated her emotions. In fact, she kept on muttering how good a husband he was.

It took a month for the reply to come from England. Cautiously his wife asked him each day if there was any news. He was not in the habit of talking business to his wife, but he answered good-humoredly. At last the answer from England was received. He told his wife one night that to-morrow she might know who her parents were. Her nerves were all on edge.

The institution had knowledge of his wife's parents. It seemed that only recently a woman had come to their office inquiring about the child, and bringing

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evidence that she was the mother. They had had no inkling at that time of the whereabouts of the girl, but they knew that she was in America, and thither went her mother in search of her. They enclosed the mother's address.

And our little world is one big pot of coincidents, it would seem. Hogerman knew the woman. He knew her well. She was one of his present employees,—a green hand in his own shop!

He at once dismissed his lawyer.

When he came home in the evening his wife was all anxiety. She had thinned through the few weeks, awaiting her fate. He looked cross, and she dared not greet him directly with her questions. She danced about him for some time, attending him feverishly, and still he didn't say anything. She could not bear it any longer.

"Oh, how I wish I could see my mother!" she sighed.

"Don't bother me," he snapped. "You have no mother!"

## Sisters

WHILE Mary was still in the seventh grade grammar school, a child twelve years old, her sister Rhoda complained that she was supporting the kid. Rhoda was considerably older than her "kid" sister, but ridiculously smaller than Mary, for her age. Not that Mary was overgrown for her years, but that Rhoda was simply a skirt and waist, and the waist was too small on her twelve-year-old sister. Her face alone bore witness to her twenty-two years, and at that she had to use the puff and rouge to keep it from proclaiming even more years in the factory.

To these complaints Mary would reply with some heat:

"What a jealous thing! I never seen anything like her. She's jealous because I'm gonna graduate next year, and she was never in the seventh grade even."

"I don't care," Rhoda would retort with bitterness, tears springing to her eyes. "A lot you know if you do go to school. Take off my waist." She would suddenly fall to tearing the waist off her sister. "Never dare put on nothin' of mine; d'you hear? Never!"

"Pest!" Mary would explode, resisting her sister. "You think a lot I care for your rags. . . . It's



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too small on me anyways. You think I got a hunch like you?" and she would viciously draw in her young body in imitation of her sister.

Then Rhoda would go off in hysterics and vow repeatedly that she'd never again go to work in the factory if the kid wouldn't.

Nevertheless, they slept in one bed (the same bed where Rhoda wept over her mortifications) and Mary kept on squeezing herself into her jealous hunch-back sister's clothing.

But have not wise men spoken of evolution, or some other institution in operation under Father Time? The case of Mary and Rhoda, two sisters in blood, in love, and in quarrels—two sisters of one father and one mother, in one dress and one bed—this case, I repeat, shall illustrate the sagas of our Magi, as set forth:

For be it known that Mary was never to be blessed by the Fates with the fortune of tasting the sweet, savory ceremony of graduation. Times were bad, and Mary's father, in combination with Rhoda, scantily supplied the needs of the little family. Sternly the father debated the matter with the mother, and the mother groaned once or twice—of which she was sometimes guilty when going to the grocery, — then there was a visit to the School Committee, and a little explanation of hard luck, and a working certificate for Mary was procured.

Which set Mary in preparation for the factory on the next Monday morning; which made her father

## SISTERS

watch her sternly from the corner of his eye, when she didn't see it; which caused her mother to be embarrassingly fonder of her and pester her, as Rhoda would call it, which caused Mary's boasting that now she would buy better dresses than her sister ever had.

But Rhoda, where was she? She swelled up like a five-cent balloon, and vowed immediately that she'd give the fore-flusher trouble in the factory. Mary in turn referred to her sister's hunch-back, and the row was started.

It was on Sunday morning previous to that Monday morning—the morning so epoch-making for the family. As a result Mary could not get a certain waist of Rhoda's which she liked, and Rhoda lay weeping in their common bed all that Sunday.

Still not on speaking terms, the two sisters retired for the night. Mary could not resist a spontaneous temptation and stuck out a tongue to her sister before crawling under the one cover and cuddling her young body close to the hunch-back's.

In the morning Mary woke earlier than usual, in a state of fervid expectation. Rhoda was already up and out of bed. As always, her father was gone, and her mother was prowling around the house like a ghost, slicing bread, and making sandwiches.

For some time Mary was the only one who said anything. She noticed that her lunch was being put up in one bundle with Rhoda's and their state of siege

## SISTERS

recurred to her. "I don't want to eat with her; she said she'd make me trouble."

Their mother sighed, and wrapped up the lunch in two separate scraps of newspaper.

But Mary was chagrined because Rhoda made no retort. The hunch-back sat at her coffee mute, as if no verbal missile had been thrown at her. "She'll croak when I make more money than her," Mary thought.

It was time to start out; still Rhoda did not move. Mary grew nervous. "It's late," she said to her mother, indirectly reminding Rhoda to start out.

Rhoda rose from her seat, took her lunch, and made a step. But suddenly she grasped her sister in her arms, and was kissing her madly. "Poor little sister," she sobbed. "Poor little sister!"

## Ades' "Ad" for Aid

TO the headquarters!" Mrs. Ades ordered, leaning back in her seat.

The chauffeur at once started the limousine for the Belgian relief headquarters. He knew where his mistress meant him to take her; he was an experienced man.

Before they had left the fashionable street behind them, however, Mrs. Ades changed her mind. She carried the little tube to her lips, and ordered:

"Ades' Department Store, Stephen."

The automobile at once turned its course thither.

William Ades, proprietor of the great business house, was at the office. He dismissed his superintendent when his wife was shown in.

He met her in his noted cordial manner, for which he was so admired in his business world. "How are you, darling?" he asked, and taking her gently in his arms, placed her in his own seat. "I congratulate you."

"So you've heard, dear?" she registered surprise. "I suppose you read about it in the papers this morning, dear?"

"Oh, ye-es," drawled Mr. Ades, as if he were pleasing an extra-good customer. "Quite a big display on the front page. I was immediately attracted by it." He took a newspaper from his desk. "Mrs. Ades



## ADES' "AD" FOR AID

Elected President of Belgian Relief.' That's the second surprise you've given me, darling. President of the Associated Charities, too, I understand. Is it not too hard for you, dear?"

"Not if I like it," replied his wife sweetly. "The poor dears! How they must be suffering there, in Belgium! . . . But I've dropped in to ask you a little advice, dear."

"Yes, ——?" he said.

"You see, dear, we would like to fix up our window at the headquarters — something attractive, you know. Can't you suggest something?"

"Anything from the war zone, I should think, would be O K," said Mr. Ades. "You have some stuff there, have you not?"

"Ye-es, rifles, pieces of shell — even a cannon ball."

"Good enough," assured Mr. Ades. "Though some clothing — from the war, you know, would be better."

"For instance ——?"

"Oh, a pair of shoes the poor children there are wearing. Effect, don't you know."

"Ah!" she gasped in comprehension. Then she kissed him, wrapped herself up in her furs, and left him to his business.

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The automobile wormed its way through the shopping district. The horn blew incessantly until they had turned into a wider street bordered on one side

## ADES' "AD" FOR AID

by a metropolitan park. On the other side ran a line of milliners' and dressmakers' window displays of the highest kind. Now and then the car flashed by a florist's shop. On this street the Ades' limousine fell in with a line of other automobiles.

The car veered to the left, and tore full speed down a little street of the fashionable district. Mrs. Ades could almost see the Headquarters from the corner.

Suddenly she started forward in her seat, uttered a little shriek of horror, and shut her eyes. Even with her eyes shut, she saw the automobile flying upon the child. . . . She shuddered.

But Stephen was a good man on the job. He applied the brakes, and the car stopped. Mrs. Ades was jerked heavenward, and then she landed back on her seat.

She opened her eyes and breathed. The little boy was lying at the forewheel, frightened, crying, but unhurt.

She was breathing hard. Her heart was pressing, yet she was determined to avoid hysterics on the street, with no maid around. She made a move to get out of the car. Stephen rushed to open the door.

The boy was now on his feet, still crying and pale with fright. He was a cute child, about eight years old, and did not belong to that neighborhood. He was in rags.

Mrs. Ades breathed with relief. She bent down, and touched the wan child gently on his pale cheeks.

## ADES' "AD" FOR AID

"Now, now, don't cry, little one. I'll give you a dollar and you run home, darling."

His little heart was throbbing with fright. He could not stop crying.

Mrs. Ades felt embarrassed. She wanted to be kind, and she must be kind. Yet, it was not pleasant to be soothing the little brat in tatters.

When she was about to climb back into her automobile, she was reminded of the poor, suffering children in Belgium. Then suddenly her face lit up with an inspiration. She surveyed quickly the little figure in rags again, caught it in her arms, and bundled it into her car. A minute later the car stopped before the Belgian Relief Headquarters.

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The next day idle crowds were haunting the window of the Belgian Relief Headquarters. The newspapers had photographs of its display in the noon editions, and in advertising circles the window show was spoken of as "interesting".

Especially attractive in the window was a pair of child's shoes worn out to strips, the leather colorless from age and wear. This interesting remains of shoes stood out alone on an immaculate glass plate, and under it was a neat little card bearing the following words:

"What the children in Belgium are wearing—  
Help!"

## The Price

I SHOULD need a carload of French phrases to tell this story; for it is a Society story. But, as I don't know enough French to mutilate the language, I must needs tell this story in plain, intelligent English.

There was a little girl by the name of Lillian, who worked in a sweater factory. And when Lillian was seventeen she must have been rather pleasant to look upon. For be it understood, that not without reason does a foreman shower his attentions upon a slow "hand." But Lillian's aspirations flew beyond the walls of the sweater factory. Alas, her young heart was craving for Society.

Not enough that she knew the name of every movie actor upon looking at the picture. She even knew the name, habits and pedigree of every society girl who eloped with her chauffeur. Ay, she even pretended to know which of these chauffeurs happened to be married—in which case the elopement was considered a greater Society stunt.

So Lillian yearned away for Society. The Society columns in the newspapers — may they increase and multiply (on some other planet) — nourished her glutton fancy for Society, until she could actually find incorrectnesses in the setting of the society novels that she read in the Naughty Stories Magazine.



## THE PRICE

Which should entitle her to a place in Society as some pillar or other. But, somehow, qualifications alone do not warrant admittance within the magnificence of Society precincts. If we consider Lillian's weekly allowance at the T. B. Knitting Mills, we may guess at the absence of her picture in the Sunday newspapers.

Nevertheless, perseverance — a virtue supreme — will at last plant the lowliest at the pinnacle of one's ambition. This is in reference to Lillian, who after long days of abortive dreaming finally became a solid fact to Society.

It was all a matter of chance.

For, you see, Lillian had an acquaintance who worked in the kitchen of one of the bulwarks of Society. And this acquaintance, by virtue of her social position, was the door of opportunity which finally gave Lillian access to Society.

Of a sudden, Lillian sought the friendship of that girl, and as often as possible paid her visits in the kitchen. It is true, sometimes Lillian could snatch a glance into a farther room; but mostly all she could manage was to listen to her friend talking to her of the boss, the son of the house, who was "such a nice fellow." Until (by chance) Lillian met the young scion of the house, and her position in Society took root.

For it is a rule in the Book of Etiquette to take a girl out in a taxi and to a Cabaret, and the young

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lord of the house, it would seem, had the Blue Blood in him, and he knew this by instinct.

And here is where I need some French phrase the most. I need it because it must be such as few could understand. I need it to act as a moral shock-absorber.

For Lillian, the sweater-girl, paid her toll to Society. She died at the Free Maternity Hospital in child-birth.



## The Christmas Gift

OVERLOOKING the two dwellings was the great Richards plant, — the chain of factory buildings and the adjoining town of tenements, — all the company's. For miles around nobody owned an inch of land but the Richards plant, the only exception being the Davis lot. The little house of the Davises stood like a rural wreck and literally in the shade of the magnificent, up-to-date mansion of the Richards'. Why old Richards had spared the Davis lot when he had monopolized the vicinity of his factories was part of the local mystery surrounding the peculiar friendship between the multi-millionaire and his laborer. It has been often remarked that the only reason to account for Davis' dying a poor workman, in spite of his unmistakable relation to his employer, was his stubborn nature. Only once was he assisted materially by his rich friend, and that was on his dying bed. The people of the tenements saw the Richards' limousine bring a great specialist from the city, then a nurse and medicines. And only once again had the doctor visited the place, the second time being when old Richards was stricken one summer day, soon after his friend's death.

In the children and wives, the friendship was superficially continued. Mazie Davis worked in the



## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

office of young Richards, and he nodded to her mornings as he entered. Tom Davis, too, had it steady in the shops. On the other hand, the old Mrs. Richards did her duty to their neighbors. She greeted most kindly Mrs. Davis in church, and at her semi-annual distributions of candy in the settlement school, she especially favored little Eliza Davis.

When the young Richards married, and his wife came to the house of Richards, and she thought it her duty to indulge in all the family traditions, she naturally was affected by the one regarding friendship with their immediate neighbors. To her, however, this traditional bond was more a duty than a natural impulse. It smacked of patronizing rather than friendship. This she betrayed by her flaunting eagerness to show her kindness towards her poor neighbors. She even visited old Mrs. Davis occasionally, and spoke to her most kindly of her children.

And the course of nature being alike in poor and rich, Tom Davis, too, was married. Mrs. Richards, Jr., visited the bride and spoke to her very sweetly. But the family of Davis lost their principal pay envelope in the marriage of Tom. Now, their only income was Mazie's pay, which was not enough for the support of the old mother and little Eliza, who was yet at school. Tom offered to let part of his wages go to its old purpose, but his mother refused this, well knowing his own needs as a husband. Instead, they decided that Eliza should go to work. They knew that the "office" would not employ girls of

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

Eliza's age because of the child labor law; but they hoped that in their case Richards would make an exception.

Accordingly, the next morning Eliza stayed out of school, and was led by her mother to the office of the Richards plant. Richards, Jr., received the old woman most cordially, and offered her a chair; but he could not be persuaded to employ her little girl. "Her place is in school," he said firmly. "Why, she's yet a child" — smiling kindly at Eliza. "Mrs. Davis, I would advise you to continue her education. You mustn't rob the opportunities of the child. I'm sorry, but I cannot employ her. It's against the law."

So Eliza went back to school. But still Mrs. Davis found it difficult to manage the household, and at the first occasion she spoke to Mrs. Richards about it. Mrs. Richards replied in her usual friendly way, but upon hearing what was desired of her, she even reprimanded Mrs. Davis for such designs upon her own child — a mere schoolgirl. She absolutely refused to influence her son to employ Eliza. Mrs. Davis felt very guilty after this interview, and the plan was given up.

That November was a deluge of rain, but December showed winter in all its ferocity. There was a scarcity in coal, and everything else was soaring high. The little family often remembered what help Eliza's pay might have brought them, but they let no word fall on the subject. Since her talk with Mrs. Richards Mrs. Davis was pained to think of it, and the others

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

avoided reference to it. She grew fonder of Eliza, and sadder, and more thoughtful. Mazie grew uneasy over her mother's health, and for nights she lay with open eyes, listening to sudden groans from her mother. Once, when Mrs. Davis was bending over the sleeping Eliza, Mazie heard her mutter through her tears: "Forgive me, child. I'll never, never again send you to work — never!"

But active Mrs. Richards, Jr., could not know the torments of a mother. When her husband once mentioned to her by accident how he had refused employment to little Eliza Davis, it manifestly hurt her sweet disposition. "Why, my dear," she said in her comely reproach, "how could you? Perhaps they need her pay, dear. And—your fathers were such friends . . ."

Then, most wisely, she did not press the matter for a while.

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Christmas eve a party of friends were entertained at the mansion. But in the morning the entire party—including the Richards—were to go to a neighboring residence of one of the guests for the Christmas dinner. There was laughter and shouting as the guests settled in their automobiles in front of the mansion, and Mrs. Richards, Jr., was the merriest. Her husband was wrapping her little feet in a bear's skin, and was about to order the chauffeur to start, when she suddenly remembered something. "O,

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

dear," she exclaimed, "I must go into the Davises. I must—you know!"

On that account the entire row of limousines halted. Richards noticed with satisfaction how some of his guests commented on his wife's democracy; and she herself was conscious of their eyes following her down the untrodden snow to the Davis home. "Good morning—and merry Christmas to you all!" she cried as soon as she opened the door. She stood inside, a bundle of fur, and a cute little face all fresh with the glow of the frost.

The old Mrs. Davis was confused with the visit. So were her children. "Merry Chris'mas to you, Mrs. Richards," she said. "Sit down, please — sit down."

"No, thank you. Very kind of you, Mrs. Davis," replied Mrs. Richards, "but I have no time. They're all waiting for me. I just dropped in to make little Eliza a Christmas present."

Little Eliza's heart jumped with expectancy as she heard this, and unconsciously she moved nearer the guest. Her older sister, too, was expecting that their neighbor would draw out some beautiful toy from underneath her furs. But their mother was short of breath for the instant. "A present——?" she gasped.

"Yes, a present," replied the radiant Mrs. Richards sweetly. "It's from my husband. He said that little Eliza may come to work to-morrow."





## The Life of the Dead

FOUR children had Stasha borne her husband Franuk; but only their youngest, Petrush, survived two harvests. He was a beautiful child, and the treasure of their life. Stasha watched anxiously over him, and Franuk was even more fond of him than of his cows, horse and land.

When his son was born, Franuk was not in the house. The same morning he heard the lowing of his red cow, which he knew "was coming." He ran, wakened a neighbor, and sent her to his wife; and he himself returned to his cow. Till sunrise he remained in her litter of hay, giving succor to the calving cow in the pangs of her labor. By that time fire had appeared in the little windows of the village huts. The peasants are light sleepers; all were awakened by the birth throes of Stasha and the bleating of the cow. The women crowded into the little straw-thatched house, while the men came to the barn, offering what help they could to Franuk.

With sunrise Franuk, his hands stained elbow-high with blood, entered his house. The old village midwife met him in the door. "Babba," he said, "my red cow is safe, but a beautiful heifer was born dead."

"May this be an offering for your own kin,"

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

replied the old peasant. "For a child, a beautiful boy, was born to you just now."

"And my wife?" queried Franuk. He looked over the heads of the women to his wife's bed.

"She is well," replied the woman. "Ay, even as healthy as your cow."

Franuk was satisfied. He did not go near his wife; it was broad day, and the sowing season. He yoked his horse to the plow and marched to field, carrying the plow above the ground. All the men and women had gone to field. But the old midwife did not go that day. She watched over the confined woman, and did the housework in her stead.

At noon Franuk came for dinner. He first entered the barn and paid his respects to the sick cow. Then he looked around the yard. Everything had been attended to by the old midwife. The village shepherd had come for the cattle as usual; the swine and chickens were fed; the yard swept clean. In the house the aged nurse had set the table for Franuk with a bowl of steaming potatoes and a loaf of corn-bread.

He entered. At a glance he took in the perfect order of the room and bowl of potatoes. His wife's face brightened. He knelt beside her bed. She smiled happily, raised the heavy, cotton-stuffed cover and showed him his child at her breast. He lifted a callous, slime-covered hand, made with it the sign of the cross on his breast, and brought his moustache to the infant's face.

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

His wife smiled, folded her bare arm over his sun-coppered neck, and weighed his head down, close to the bed.

Henceforth Stasha lived only for her Petrushek. She had christened him early, and told the priest of the heifer which was born dead, it seemed, that her boy might live. But to further guard her child from evil, she yielded to all the superstitions of the peasantry. She clad Petrushek in nothing but pure white linen until his seventh birthday, and until that age cut not a hair from his head. Indeed, he was a remarkable sight to a chance passer-by through the village, — a beautiful peasant-child clad in pure white linen, and with flaxen curls flying in the breeze.

Franuk evinced no such concern over his son; yet, he was no less fond of him. When he plowed he would look beyond the horizon, and see the vision of his Petrushek walking in the fresh furrows after the plow. When he sowed, he prayed that the field yield abundance to afford purchase of another piece of land for his son's sake. And when harvesting, Franuk looked into the future and beheld his son, a stalwart youth, joyously reaping in the fields beside him. Such should be the visions of every true man of the earth.

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And Petrush grew in the companionship of care and nature to fulfil his parents' dreams. At the village school he learned enough literature for a peasant,

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

and took himself early to the soil. He was hardly eighteen when he had earned himself esteem in the village. Every day some neighbor would say to Franuk: "Let your son marry my daughter. I will give her so much land in dowry." But Franuk would reply: "My son will choose his own wife. He is man enough for that." And Franuk said that, in truth, because he thought no girl in the village worthy of his son.

And the girls sought Stasha's favor for her son's sake. But she, too, never encouraged any one. Petrush himself seemed not concerned with girls at all. When he was in his twentieth year, it was breathed to his parents that he had been seen paying attention to Stephan the Blacksmith's daughter; but they made nothing of it. An artisan among the Russian-Polish peasants is usually the poorest in the community. Stephan owned no land; that was why he forged horse-shoes for the village. Franuk and his wife believed that their son was wise enough not to marry a girl who could not bring land with her.

Petrush was nearing the age of military service. His mother said to him: "My son, marry before you go into service, and you will have a wife and child to greet you when you return." But he answered no, he would marry after he had served the Czar. Franuk grunted approvingly to this, and Stasha said no more.

It was the same day that their country entered into war. The news, however, did not reach them un-



## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

til the next day. A pedlar-Jew brought it. The peasants left their fields to hear it from the Jew with their own ears. Little was done on the fields that day. At night the Starshina, or village head, was called to the nearest government office. He returned at noon the following day, and the entire population awaited him on the road. He brought warrants for all the serviceable men in the village. Among these Petrush, son of the husbandman Franuk, was called upon to serve his country and the Czar of all the Russias.

Stasha's heart was heavy. When her son was handed the papers she burst into tears. "No! No!" she cried, "I won't let him go! I won't let my Petrushek go!" She clung to him, and was sobbing on his young breast. But Franuk stood pale and stern. "Woman, let him go," he growled. "Let him do his duty." Stasha stepped back. Her husband's word is a final commandment to a peasant woman.

That day nobody went afield, and that night nobody in the village slept. The reservists were boisterous and carelessly hilarious. The mothers and wives wept at the lime-hearths. The older men sat in groups puffing at their pipes, and speaking gravely. Youth suddenly felt free and reckless. The girls dressed in their best, and unblushingly rambled about hanging on the arms of the conscripts. Fond words were spoken between boys and girls which otherwise might never have been said. Girlish giggles resounded from the neighboring woods, the barns and hay-stacks.

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

The young peasants suddenly decided which girls they loved, and swore their love to them. The girls for once knew for whom on the battlefield their hearts would languish.

In the morning the entire population escorted the recruits a distance from the village. The parting on the road was a scene indescribable. Mothers weeping, young and old kissing, and the recruits themselves steadfastly silent and smiling. Suddenly a girl would reel into a soldier's arms, and nestle to his breast. "What, is this your choice, my son?" the mother asked. "Yes, mother," the soldier replied. "And please, mother, take good care of her for me."

To town most of the conscripts were accompanied by their parents and wives. There was a procession of them in farmer carts on the highway winding in from all the villages. In the district town were gathered men from all the surrounding country to be marched to the government town. All day long the parents and lovers shadowed the departing about town, fondling them. But the men were mostly nervous and drunk. Early the next morning they were mustered in a column, and could be followed no longer.

Franuk and Stasha had both accompanied their son to the county town. Franuk had not uttered a word since they had started out from home. Stasha sat in the cart weeping on Petrush's shoulder, while her husband trotted alongside the horse in silence. When it came to final parting, Stasha clung to her son and

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

would not let go of him. But Franuk tore her away. Now they were standing, with other parents, watching for a last glance at their beloved. "Ah, Petrushek mine! Son of mine!" Stasha kept howling like a wounded she-wolf.

"Woman, will you stop that!" Franuk suddenly snarled. For just then he saw Petrush approaching. The boy was flushed with the excitement, and looked the manliest in line.

"Petrush!" Stasha exclaimed, and darted forward. But Franuk's paw closed over her mouth, covered her face, and thrust her backwards. When she regained her balance Petrush was gone. A crowd like her stood in the cloud of dust that the army left behind; but Stasha could see nothing except the vanishing heels of the soldiers. "Ah — Petrushek mine! Darling mine! Ah-ah-ah!"

Franuk, rigid, as if hewn from stone, stared after the column until it had disappeared. The mouthpiece of his cold pipe snapped between his teeth, and still he held it there. At last he moved. "Woman, get thee into the vozsh," he commanded his wife. She stepped on the wheel, and rolled upon the hay in the cart. He hopped on the side, his feet, strapped tight in shoes of birch-bark, dangling over the forewheel. They fell in line with a procession of carts pulling now out of town, the horses trotting like mourners. Some of these vehicles were driven by women, the husbands having gone to war. All the way Stasha kept

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

rocking in her seat, and lamenting: "Ah — milei moi! Ah — darling mine!"

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Stasha became a tearful old peasant woman. Franuk retained his vacant stare and iron silence. But one day there came to them Hanna, the blacksmith's daughter, and sat down on their stoop, crying.

"What news have you from Petrush?" she asked.

"Why, what affairs have you with my son?" Stasha demanded.

"He is my husband," Hanna blurted out, in tears.

"Your husband!" screamed Stasha, and all the bitterness of her heart rose to her lips. "Your husband, you say? When did my son ever marry you, you wench? What priest has performed the ceremony, eh? Away with you, you impudent liar!"

"But I swear to you, he is my husband!" the girl cried, and fell to her knees before Stasha. "I swear, for I bear his child under my breast!"

"What!" shrieked Stasha. "Away from here, you harlot! Do you think you will make me believe what you say? Enough men have you been sporting with over the fields. Go to him whose child it is."

"Holy Maria!" wept the girl, and covered her face in shame.

"Pashol! — Off with you!" screeched Stasha,

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

grasping a spade. "Run, you daughter of a jade, or I'll break your head! Off, you slut!"

Franuk had been standing motionless. Now he wrenched the spade from his wife's hand, and thrust her into the house like a child. "Pah!" he spat at the girl, and entered.

Stasha and Franuk received letters from their son, and the old village school-teacher read to them what Petrush wrote. But in each letter the boy begged his parents to treat Hanna, the blacksmith's, as their own daughter. He would marry her, he wrote, as soon as the war would be over. At this Stasha gnashed her teeth, and Franuk spat. Still, they craved to listen even to that. For it came from their son.

To their chagrin, the village seemed to sympathize with the girl. There appeared to be many such unmarried wives in the villages, and untrue to all traditions, they were not regarded with contempt. But their case, the two peasants convinced themselves, was exceptional. Even though their son had written them corroborating the girl's story; still they could not consent to the girl and her station. They could not see it in any other light but that the girl had seduced their son.

And, in time, joyous tidings reached them about their Petrush. The school-master read in the newspapers that their son had been awarded a cross for bravery. Soon after, Petrush himself related his heroic adventure to them in a letter.



## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

Then long weeks passed and no word from their son. But one morning they received a packet from a government official. This they took unopened to the school-master. It contained a cross and a government notice. Petrush was dead. . . .

They lost all sense of time. Stasha was almost blind from weeping, and in Franuk's rigid brow there appeared a droop. Their field was not hoed; the yard looked like a pigsty.

But nature goes her way. What has been sown will bloom in season. The cry went through the village, "Hanna the Blacksmith's is dying in birth!" The priest from the nearby parish was hurriedly brought to her for confession. The girl's shrieks rang through the air, stirred the entire village. In their little house Stasha and her husband heard it. Stasha stopped weeping, and listened. Franuk sat mute.

Presently the wooden bolt rattled, and the door was thrown open. An old woman stood on the threshold. "Stasha," she cried, "go and forgive the girl, or she'll die. The father priest has sent me for you. Come, in the name of God!"

Stasha started up in her seat, and sank back. Franuk did not move a muscle. "Pah!" spat the woman; and she fled from them.

The door remained ajar. A crowd had gathered around their yard, shouting and threatening.

Old Ivan, sage of the village, came hobbling along on his stick. "Why don't you forgive the maiden?" he said, raising and lowering his shaggy brows as he

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

spoke. "Because of your wayward son she is dying. That you may have a namesake, she suffers!"

Stasha moved. She was watching her husband.

"No!" snarled Franuk.

The sage shook his stick in fury. "You bull!" he threatened, "her blood shall be upon your head. Even your own son will curse you from his grave!"

He trod away leaning heavily on his cane, and slammed the door after him.

Stasha groaned aloud. She listened.

"Franuk!" she said at last.

Franuk did not move.

"Fran —— !" she implored.

He kept mute.

"Let us go to her," she begged.

She crawled over to him, and laid her bony hands on his shoulder. Her tears trickled down upon his gray head.

"Hush!" he muttered.

"For Petrushe's sake, — Fran! It is his child. . . . It shall be our own child. . . . Please!"

"Woman!"

He scowled at her angrily, and pushed her off. He had stirred. But he did not resume his obdurate position. Suddenly he fell on one knee and made the sign of the cross.

"Fra-a-nuk!" Stasha coaxed him.

He glared at his wife:

"You fool! I'm praying for her!"

## THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

On the street the villagers cheered Stasha and Franuk, as if their own lives were being saved. As soon as they appeared on the threshold, the women said afterwards, it went better with the girl. Franuk at once told the priest that he would take Hanna and her child to his estate, that the child should be to him what his son had been. Stasha — the women bore witness — was the first one to handle the beautiful baby boy. She kissed him with as much joy as she had kissed for the first time her own Petrushek, when he was born.

## Something to Eat

THE young man slowly swung the massive door of the employment office, and came down the stone stairs. On reaching the sidewalk, he passed his hand over his haggard eyes, and leaned against the wall.

A grunting little man shuffled close by, spat across the sidewalk with evident pleasure, and came to a standstill, observing the hungry youth. They were standing directly under the big, gold-lettered sign, "Employment Bureau."

"Want a job?" the little man asked.

"Yes," faltered the youth, and stared at the stranger.

But he could not see. His sight was blurred; his eyes were glazed from hunger. He could only distinguish the little figure, not the tattered clothes, outworn shoes and wan, unshaved face. A little flame of hope flickered up in the hungry one.

"Will you — give me — something to do for — a meal?" he stammered.

The other looked wise. "You're dead hungry," he observed, not at all astonished.

The youth groaned. Something in his stomach seemed to sink and there was a bigger, more painful chasm there. He pressed his cold palm against his snapping forehead.



## SOMETHING TO EAT

“And you ain’t got a thing left that you might sell, either,” continued the little devil deliberately, as he scrutinized the youth. “All you’ve left on you is a pair of rotten pants, a shirt and a coat that nobody would buy. Even your socks are torn. I see your bare feet through the holes in your shoes.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the boy.

The little man was silent. He looked at the big sign over their heads, and his little eyes traveled to a wide show window of a restaurant a few yards away. Behind the glass was an epicurean display that could make a dyspeptic’s mouth water.

Suddenly the hungry youth became delirious. “Please!” he muttered. “Please give me something — to eat. I’m so — hungry!”

He grasped the lapel of the little tramp’s dilapidated coat, and could not steady himself.

The tramp’s funny little face twitched. “I’m hungry meself!” he whined. He tried to spit, but his mouth was dry.

The young man shivered. “Oh!” he cried. “I must get something to eat — I must!”

“Yes. We must get something to eat; we must!” repeated the little fellow.

Both stood leaning against the wall. Then the tramp instinctively shuddered; a policeman was slowly coming in their direction. The young man saw nothing. He was wiping his dry lips with a trembling hand.

Suddenly he felt a pain at his ear, and something

## SOMETHING TO EAT

struck against his eye. Dimly he conceived the little man jumping at him and punching him. He swayed and fell. . . .

He was conscious of chaos of noise, intermingled with the clanging of a gong. He was being dragged by the collar over the cold asphalt, then he was swept up and dropped on a wooden surface. He felt as if on the deck of a moving ship. A gong was clanging incessantly.

An indefinite time passed. His teeth were being pressed, forced apart. Something tingling trickled down his throat. He gulped at it, and opened his eyes.

Over him were bending two policemen, one with a flask in his hand. A tattered little man beside him, his funny little face all mutilated and smeared with blood, yelped out with joy, upon seeing him open his eyes. "I told you!" he cried. "I told you we'd get somethin' to eat!"



## The Pest

THE lobby was practically deserted. The house was a typical traveling-salesmen's hostelry. But on Sunday evenings it was free of the bustle caused by the constant revolving of the door, hurrying by of salesmen with sample cases, bell-hops' cries. Traveling men, as a rule, need either life in its full swing or sleep, of which they run short in their profession. Most of the guests were either snatching a bit of rest in their rooms, or away at some gayer place in town.

In the farthest corner, hard by the telephone desk, sat a lonely group of guests. They were smoking their cigars, legs crossed, and chatting leisurely, as if they were a family circle and not a hodgepodge of selling-dogs, thrown together for the first time. Tonight their conversation lacked life. A woman, a petticoat seller, was amongst them. Under the circumstances the salesman's ever-ready stock of vivacious episodes was not quite the proper thing, so that these people who could entertain a buyer at any time of the day, suddenly felt a gloomy helplessness threatening them. Involuntarily they remembered homes, wives, and others. . . .

Suddenly one of the group, a clean-cut young man, laughed softly to himself, emitting a curl of smoke from his cigar. The woman looked at him cu-

## THE PEST

riously. A fat little garter-salesman recrossed his stubby little legs.

"I have a story," the young man suggested, "that I have never told before. If you will allow me —— "

"Why, yes; please," the woman said.

The young salesman took a deep puff at his cigar, threw his head back, and watching the smoke curl upwards, began:

I should call it Pest, I think. Whenever I hear the word Pest I can't help laughing.

I was in my twenty-first year then. I had never thought much of girls, but I knew that some girls were pests. (I had probably never got over my impression of my school teachers.) The only woman I had ever really spoken to was my mother. And my mother is the sweetest woman on earth. I held that mothers were angels.

Then I met a little girl, and I knew at once that girls may be angels, too. But it would seem that girls also may be pests. That little angel was it — a Pest!

I didn't know it immediately, as I have already told you. Friends, however, always will be there to spoil your pleasures. I had a school chum — we shall call him Jerry Stevens, for the present — and he was the friend in my case. "You are in love with the girl," he said to me, looking straight into my eyes. "I'm ashamed of you, Charles Braddock!"

"I like her," I confessed.

"The first time you met her?"



## THE PEST

"Yes."

He laughed. "So did I — the first time. But I've changed my mind since. Wait till you know her, Charlie dear!"

He said it with such sarcasm that I felt slighted. I protested:

"She is good-looking."

"Ye-e-s," mimicked Jerry, "and she's friendly, too, I suppose. Stuck on you the first time she pipes you. Love at first sight, eh? . . . Well, I don't blame you, though. I fell for it myself the first time I met her. 'Why, glad to know you, I'm sure,' she warbles. And I press her little hand like a shy schoolboy."

"But ——" I interrupted.

"Wait!" he mocked. "Then she looks at me with her baby-doll eyes, and I go red like — like you went to-day. 'O, Mr. Miller,' she coos to the boob who'd introduced me, 'please give Mr. Stevens your seat. I wish to get better acquainted with him.' The guy looks at me like a murderer, and I flop into his seat, and think I'm in heaven."

He observed me whimsically, expecting me to applaud his burlesque. But, Lord, how could I? "And, my young friend Charles," he continued, shaking his finger at me, "you had the exact experience to-night. I watched you."

That was true. But her spell lay too heavily over me. I persisted. "What is her name?" I asked.

"So! You haven't even her name down. Fine! That's exactly how she struck me the first time.

## THE PEST

Couldn't think of the name for the life o' me. Only the sunshine eyes, and the kiss-me-kid talk I couldn't forget. She's a great pest, she is!"

I was shocked. But my friend continued.

"It's a decent name, all right. But don't you look it up in the telephone directory; there are too many Kellys there."

"First name?" I faltered.

"Oh, blushing old maids!" he jeered. "It's a sweet name, my dear, a sweet name!"

"No kiddin'!" I grumbled.

"Lillian!" he suddenly uttered in a deep bass.

I was angry. "It doesn't matter for my purpose whether you like her or not," I uttered firmly. "I like her."

The cynic grinned in my face. "Wait until you know her."

Presently I had occasion to know her. After I had been dreaming about her four and one half nights in succession — the half night being in continuation of a night I could not sleep from thinking of her — I met Miss Lillian Kelly again. It happened while I was rushing in the subway for a train home, after office hours. That evening I was late for supper.

"Mr. Braddock!" she gasped in delightful surprise.

"How d' y' do," I responded, confused, and paid two fares.

"Isn't it lovely," she chirped to me, after I had

## THE PEST

desperately fought in the crowd to provide a seat for her, and more desperately still, a strap-hold above it for myself. "We shall meet now every evening on the car. I work in the Sumner Building, you know. Really, I had no idea your office was so near."

I found no words. It wasn't exactly honest of me to have her believe me the proprietor of an office, when in fact I was only a second-class clerk, but all is fair in war and love. The only fear I had was that she might be earning more than I. In which case I could not hope.

"We may have met before," I suggested. And I really thought that I remembered having once resigned my seat to a girl who looked as sweet as she.

"It's possible," she admitted. "But now we must meet every day, Mr. Braddock." And she pronounced my name with a softness that gave me a thrill.

So I escorted her to her house — which was out of my way. Then I walked home, when I should have ridden on a car. And all because I selfishly kept on thinking: "That girl is in love with me."

The next day I should have been fired at the office for at least one big mistake I was guilty of. But I wasn't, lucky for me. I needed my fourteen dollars per week now badly. Alimony, from what I hear, should be the greatest modern curse upon the shoulders of the suffering sons of Adam, but the wooing of Eve, we must not forget, had cost him a rib. I couldn't exactly afford a rib, because then my Eng-

## THE PEST

lish-cut, tight-fitting suit might not have fitted me so well; but, nevertheless, I at once staked everything on the ace of hearts.

You see, I use this rather conventional metaphor, because I soon came to discover that I was in a game. For bad or worse, I found myself facing a most annoying rival. Annoying because he seemed to be an old friend of hers, annoying because he was financially better fortified than I, and annoying because — you shall know presently.

Of course I wore my English-cut suit the following evening, when I ventured home via subway. Actually, I waited a few minutes at the entrance of the kiosk before the rush brought to me Miss Kelly. She was more than glad to see me. My heart leaped high and rested ninety-nine in the shade. It was an awfully nice day, wasn't it? I thought so, too. The paper said it would rain; what did I think of the paper? I thought that a paper should never for a moment inspire in a sensible person belief in it. But wasn't it crowded on the platform?

Indeed it was. And a crowd is always a blind beast. A young fellow, also in an English suit, suddenly loomed before me from the crowd and rushed upon my lady fair. An awful lump rose in my throat. She was very happy to see him. But haven't we gentlemen ever met before? I, Mr. Braddock, must meet her best friend, Mr. Spiess; she was sure we would be great friends.

So we two shook hands, when we should have pre-

## THE PEST

ferred to kick each other. He smiled an ingratiating smile, and I murmured something equally hypocritical. Then we glared at each other, and vehemently fell to begging our mutual friend, Miss Kelly, to allow us to escort her to the "Passing Show of the Century," which she had just mentioned she was *dying* to see.

That fellow Spiess, I concluded at once, was a big pest. He insisted that Miss Kelly allow him to buy the tickets, because she had promised him last time he had taken her out that she would go with him to a show sometime again. She didn't remember that, but thought it possible, yet not binding. At any rate, he had taken her out before, so she would let Mr. Braddock arrange the little theatre party this time.

I almost laughed right into the face of my new acquaintance. He glared at me over the top of her little gray hat, which for all the world looked like a battleship. I appreciated his feelings and stared back at him. But Miss Kelly stood between us like a charming diplomatic doctrine. For the present, however, I was on better land than my opponent.

Suddenly she turned her sweet torpedo eyes on me more lovingly. "But we must take Mr. Spiess along with us," she said, and I thought that I heard the respective gentleman chuckle aloud.

"Gladly," I whined. She favored me with a rapid stare of appreciation. But my enemy must have heard my whine. He cackled.

And let me remind you here, my friends, that



## THE PEST

there is no sunshine but that it casts a shadow in its train. I was to buy the tickets, do the honors, and my rival seemed to do all the suggesting and planning. Well, he thought that we should get orchestra seats, not first balcony. Then I had better buy the tickets early, and try to get the seats not too near the stage, but near enough. For, don't you know, it spoils the show if one sees the rouge on the actors' faces.

The theatre night was Saturday. I had my full pay in my pocket when I rang the bell at the house of Miss Kelly. She didn't invite me in, instead, she asked me to wait on the porch. She was all ready except hat and coat. In a minute she appeared, pleased and sprightly. She was dressed in a red cape, a pinkish gown, and a shapely hat to match. I could have snatched her in my arms and run off with her, she was so charming.

But again my perfect day ran short. That pest of a Spiess had been in the house for half an hour, and came out after her, greeting me chummily. Chagrin and jealousy gnawed at my heart. Why, oh, why, hadn't she invited me into the house? And he had been there before me!

Naturally, I wore my English suit, quite recently cleaned and pressed; but my rival was also attired in English garb, as well fitting as mine. Ay, and the expensive scarf-pin that sparkled under his chin I could never afford!

He bought the box of candy. I protested, and

## THE PEST

ate as little of it as I could do without, to show my real taste for it. After the show I promptly led the way for a lunch. Miss Kelly had exquisite manners, and ordered admirably. She ate with gusto, chatting all the while and laughing gaily. Spiess ate rather too heartily, I thought. I, for my part, had no appetite, except for throwing myself at the fellow and choking him to death.

He whispered to me that he would pay for the supper, and I discouraged him harshly. He grinned.

The matter of escorting her home was settled by Miss Kelly herself. We both parted from her at her door, then bade each other a friendly "Good-night."

On my way home my spirits were low. Upon reconsideration, however, I found myself the favorite. Somehow, I couldn't help believing that she cared more for me than for my rival.

We met again, Miss Kelly and myself. But always, God alone knows how, the pest of a Spiess dropped upon us to mar my life. To be sure, I found new beauties and charms in her every time I saw her. I lived now on nothing else but dreams about her.

At our first meeting following the theatre party she gave me a little surprise. "Please call me Lillian," she said to me. "I want you to call me Lillian, not Miss Kelly."

I called her Lillian, and repeated the delicious name on every possible pretext. But here again the brute of a rival was running neck in neck with me.

## THE PEST

He, too, was calling her Lillian, and even more familiarly than I. I had gained no distinction.

I soon grew tired of being haunted by a rival, and began treating him rudely. He, I must confess, paid me in my own coin, with interest. Miss Kelly had to be forever applying her wiles to keep us in peace.

I grew bolder, and asked her why that fellow was haunting our meetings. She regretted it mildly, and begged me not to scorn him. The poor boy, she said, loved her madly. He followed her about wherever she went.

Four weeks of wooing rendered me a changed person. I lost in weight, dressed fastidiously, and committed innumerable mistakes at the office. I was nervous and petulant. My meetings with Miss Kelly grew regular and by appointment. Still, nine times out of ten, Spiess crossed our path.

The matter struck me as abnormal. How could he know where we met, or when we met? I was puzzled.

Yet, this one solace I had. The girl unmistakably was paying more attention to me. I was enraptured to see how my rival was tortured by my advancement.

But one day I made a discovery that stunned me. At each of my appointments with her she had arranged, at the same time and place, a meeting with my rival.

And I made another discovery. My friend Jerry

## THE PEST

Stevens knew Spiess intimately. It seemed that Spiess was of a good family, a law student, and an old admirer of Miss Kelly. On this occasion Jerry took another malicious fling at the girl.

"I do believe she likes him, too," he said, unconscious of the pain it gave me. "But all this pest of a girl does is keep him jealous, red-hot, all the time."

"How?"

"She simply gets any poor sucker that don't know her, and pretends to be in love with him, and Spiess and the other slob wrangle over her like two hens. That's how! She's good and beautiful, isn't she? But she certainly likes to see boys break their heads over her."

Then suddenly, the enigma of the persistent presence of my rival at our meetings was solved in my mind. She had been arranging so! Something dear to me was shattered, broken. I shuddered. Still, I clung to a slim hope.

"How do you know?" I questioned.

"I've been her dupe myself — once."

I realized everything. I saw her duplicity — the blind part I played in her whimsical love affair. I was enraged.

"She's a pest!" I exclaimed.

I thought that I saw a glint in my friend's eye.

The following appointment with her I didn't keep. I avoided any place where I might have encountered her. Once I saw her in the subway, but evaded her, unnoticed.

## THE PEST

Still, something in me was restless, pining. I was sure it was not that I cared for the girl. I hated her. I hated all girls! And she was a vampire. . . . She had tried to play with me, was playing with the feelings of another man. I tried all kinds of diversions, but could not sleep at night. People told me I looked haggard.

The first Saturday night after this terrible discovery I walked around the city with Jerry. It was closing time; people were streaming out of the cafés and restaurants.

Suddenly my friend grasped me by the arm. "Good God!" he exclaimed. "I didn't think Spiess was as weak as all that."

"Why?"

"Look!"

A young fellow, dead drunk and reeling, was waving his arm to us. It was Spiess. His English suit was all soiled, his face besmirched with mud. I felt a thrill of joy at this pitiable sight of my former rival.

We took him over in time to save him from the hands of a policeman. He greeted Jerry jovially, and tried to kiss him. Stevens strongly resisted this.

The sight of me drove Spiess into a drunken rage. "You son of a dog!" he cried at me, "take off your coat and fight like a man. Fight, I say!"

He poised his fists in a position to fight. Stevens held him off forcibly from jumping at me. I couldn't be enraged under the circumstances. In fact, I cau-



## THE PEST

tiously helped to tug the boy towards the depot, to take him home.

Spiess resisted, and cried that he had no use for life any longer. He mentioned Lillian Kelly, and promptly stopped and saluted the imaginary vision of her. Then he suddenly flew at me and dealt me a blow in the face.

I was now wild with rage, but only tried to keep him away from me. I didn't care to hit back. Stevens did his best to check him. But he tore himself at me, calling me names, and demanding that I fight him. In the wrangle our hats fell on the sidewalk and were stepped upon. But I always wear a soft hat, which was easily cleaned after the mud was dried, while Spiess wore a derby, as behooves a student of the law. His hat was entirely ruined.

Finally, we calmed him somehow and brought him to his shocked parents in a horrible state. Before we got rid of him, he repented his hostilities towards me, and tried to kiss me, just because I was a friend of Miss Kelly's.

I was in a fever that night. I cursed the venomous witch who had tried to play with me, and who had ruined that fellow Spiess. "Pest!" I hissed to myself.

I couldn't stop thinking of her. . . .

Early in the morning, Sunday, Stevens came to me, looking resolute and, unlike his nature, serious. He told me that he understood now that I had been the latest dupe in the affair between that pest of a girl

## THE PEST

and her victim Spiess. He related to me at length how he had served the same purpose once, and how he awoke one morning to the truth. I earnestly told him that I was wide awake myself now. When he confided in me that he hated Miss Kelly, I told him that these were exactly my feelings towards her.

"Then let us go at once and put the boy wise to her," he said.

I considered this awkward at first and did not want to go. But after some thought I was eager to.

We found the Spiess household in an awful uproar on account of the incident of the previous night. The afflicted parents greeted us friendly and thanked us for our services. The mother begged us to tell her if her boy hadn't fallen in with bad company. Stevens jocosely remarked that we were his company, and she promptly expressed her gladness that this was the case. She hoped that we would exert our good influence upon her son.

Spiess, Jr., himself was in bed, dejected, half alive. He had been lectured all morning by his father. He was ashamed to raise his eyes to us.

Stevens immediately settled himself on the edge of the bed, and proceeded to the purpose of our mission. He did it with tact and caution. The boy listened with a pained expression on his face. In fact Jerry did his part so artfully that a stone should have been made to understand Miss Kelly's duplicity and abominable nature. But Spiess only sighed and groaned.

## THE PEST

"She's a vampire!" Stevens wound up.

"A snake!" I chimed in.

"A pest!" Spiess muttered, at last.

I murmured something to Stevens, and he insisted that Spiess at once write a letter to Miss Kelly, denouncing her treachery and exposing his knowledge of it. Spiess writhed, argued, but obeyed.

I was very careful that the letter reached its destination safely.

Monday morning I received a note from Miss Lillian Kelly that I might see her after work in the subway. I pocketed the letter and took a straight course home on surface cars. Tuesday she called me on the telephone and begged me to call at her house in the evening. I went to a movie after supper. Wednesday I had a regular day, except for the evening, when I suffered a great surprise. I was half through with my supper, when my mother announced that a young lady was at the door wishing to see me. My good mother was watching my face searchingly. I blushed.

The visitor was none other than Miss Kelly. She was charming even as she was standing there before me, pale and anxious. I asked her into the reception room as politely as I could.

She found no ready, sweet talk as usual. She was evidently excited. I was very cordial.

Finally, she assumed the aggressive. "You are no longer any friend of mine?" she asked almost in tears.

## THE PEST

“Why- -er- -that is impossible,” I mumbled.

“You’ve tried to poison my - my friends against me,” she continued.

I was mute. I could not endure her gaze.

“You incited my best friend, Mr. Spiess, against me.”

“I?”

I didn’t say that because I wanted her to doubt my guilt.

Tears sprang to her eyes. “Oh, I do hope it is not true!” she cried.

I was sore with aversion. “What a pest!” I thought.

She was sobbing the next moment.

I faced her boldly, and exclaimed:

“Yes, — I want you to know it. I did it purposely!”

She stiffened, and pursed her little lips. Her face was against mine. I could feel her breath.

“Oh!” she suddenly shrieked, and fainted. I caught her in my arms.

For a second I held her, dazed. Then I pressed her to my breast, and there I was kissing her — kissing her. . . .

My mother was standing in the doorway.

What a pest!

Since that scene I have kissed her many, many times. She is my wife now. Stevens, I found out later, had visited her that Sunday evening and proposed to her. But she hadn’t fainted in his arms.

## Self-Justified

**H**IS Excellency the Governor appeared at the State House later than usual. He held a morning newspaper in his hand and nodded a genial "Good morning" to his secretary, who hastened to rise at his entrance.

A committee of five from the Manly Defense League also rose before the Chief Executive of the State. They had come to make their final appeal. Their worried, impatient faces lighted up, and they sighed with relief.

The committee was composed of five well-known radicals, three men and two women. The chairman of the committee, James Meyer, a middle-aged man, with a lame foot, immediately advanced to the Governor.

But the Governor seemed to be in no hurry. "Sit down, please. I shall be right with you," he said cordially, and resigned himself to his secretary, who was helping him take off his coat.

The lame committee-man with an effort suppressed remonstrance, but did not follow the Governor to his spacious desk. "Good God!" he murmured to himself. His fist clinched.

The anxiety on the faces of the committee members deepened. They were all on their feet, practically in the middle of the room, too nervous to sit



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down, too worried and anxious to be conscious of their unconventional position.

The Supreme State Executive deposited the bulk of his body in his armchair, and coolly took to routine business. He listened cordially to a few whispered reports from his secretary, and commenced to look over his mail.

Unconscious to themselves, the faces of the committee members hardened. How could he sit so calmly when every minute meant so much to them — so much!

Helen Bridges, the youngest of the committee, a beautiful girl with wonderful blue eyes, who came of a wealthy family, noticed the newspaper that the executive had left on a chair as he entered. "He is a murderer!" she breathed. "He read in the paper that a committee was to see him this morning, and he deliberately came in late. He will never commute Darwin Manly's sentence. He will kill an innocent man!"

"Fifteen minutes to twelve," muttered the lame James Meyer. "Twelve o'clock he goes to the chair. We must act at once."

But the Governor seemed absorbed in his mail. James Meyer shuffled a step forward, and stopped again. He was pale and quivering with anger.

"Mr. Governor, we must speak to you at once!" Helen Bridges suddenly exploded. And just as suddenly, as if by united determination, they all came forward to the Governor's desk.

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The Governor looked up, rather amused. "In one minute," he said. "Kindly sit down; I shall be right with you."

"Governor, we must!" the girl leaned over his desk, her lips tight, her eyes flashing with scorn.

"Young lady, please do not forget yourself. You are in the presence of——"

"It is the life of an innocent man, Governor. It is the life of a good man!"

The Governor wavered for an instant. "I am sorry, my good people. I cannot do anything for you. The man has been convicted by a jury."

"Oh-o-h!" the girl gasped with disappointment.

"Mr. Governor, the man is innocent!" exclaimed the lame James Meyer. "He is an idealist; he could never throw a bomb to murder human lives. It is a conspiracy against him because of his activity in the strike. We have affidavits from the witnesses that they were bought to swear falsely."

"The supreme court has confirmed his penalty," the Governor pronounced slowly.

"But why 'penalty'? He is innocent. The presiding judge himself says now that he didn't receive a fair trial."

"We cannot allow such characters at liberty."

"But this is not liberty! Only commute his death sentence. The criminal will be found."

"The criminal has been found. A jury was convinced of his guilt, and I sha'n't go against it. There

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were witnesses who saw him throw the bomb to avenge himself on the Woolen Mills."

"It's a lie!" escaped from the girl.

"What?"

"The witnesses were false! They were bought! Darwin Manly is innocent — you know it!"

"I'm through with you." And the Governor raised his bulk from the seat. "I have no time for discussion."

"There is time yet, Governor. Five minutes to twelve!"

"I will not listen!"

"Mr. Go-overnor, this is a crime. Even governors are punished." James Meyer looked him straight in the eyes. The radical's jaw was set, and he got so close to the Governor that the executive felt his breath.

The Governor wanted to retain his dignity, tried to look straight into the lame Meyer's eyes, but wavered. His gaze fell on Meyer's crippled leg, and he was reminded of the story of this man's life as he had read it in the newspapers: how he had been a common railroad worker, until he met with an accident in which he was crippled, and when the railroad company finally won out in court in the suit of damages he brought against them he became embittered, and swore to fight Capital with his life and became one of the ablest strike leaders. And the Governor thought that a man like that was really dangerous,

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and that he, the Governor, had best not deal with him just now.

"Well —— " said the Governor, and settled in his seat.

"It may not be too late — yet!" the older woman of the committee implored.

The Governor responded only with a wave of his arm.

"Twelve o'clock!" came like a death-knell from the girl. "You are a murderer! A murderer!"

She was sobbing.

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Three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day.

The Governor's secretary shoved the telephone over closer to him, and took up the receiver.

"Hello. Yes — this is the Governor's office. Who's this? — Captain Mercier? — Yes. Is that so? The man who threw the bomb confessed? Who? A strike-breaker, you say? Well — well! No, I wouldn't believe he was hired. Yes — the Governor is here. Certainly, I'll tell him. Good-bye."

The Governor leaned a little forward in his seat and listened. He grew somewhat pale, and puffed once or twice.

"I've heard!" he said to the secretary, who was about to relate the news to him. "You may tell the reporters I will make my statement now."

The clerk pressed a button, spoke a few words into the mouthpiece of the telephone, and a minute

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later a flock of reporters tore into the Governor's room.

“The reason I refused commutation,” ran part of the Governor's statement, “was because the committee demanded anarchy of me. They insulted me. I shall have a guard with me now all the time. Their leader, Meyer, made a threat upon my life.”



## Quips of Destiny

LITTLE Michail Dobrowsky, son of the naturalized American citizen and resident Fiodor Dobrow — alias Dobrowsky — was left motherless and stranded in the great city of Warsaw the first week of the Great war. It was a plain case of an awkward turn of destiny. He had been with his mother on their way to America to rejoin his father and build a new home there, for which Fiodor Dobrow had already laid the foundation; but, as Fate would have it, war was declared right after they had sold out their little homestead in the village, — even while they were on their way to their beloved father and husband, in strange places and among strange people.

“Holy Maria!” exclaimed the stranded wife when she was told by the transporting agent that passage to America was impossible for a while. “What shall I do now? Where shall I live with my little Michail? And I have no ready cash, either. I must at least return to the village. My good sir, I pray, will you return the money for my tickets?”

“No,” snapped the agent sharply, knowing the ignorance of the peasant woman. “I cannot take the tickets back, and you shall not have the money.”

She begged him to advance her enough to carry her child and herself back to their home village, but

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the agent, whose business in general consisted of bleeding the ignorant emigrants, sturdily refused her any aid whatsoever. "I am ruined by this war!" he kept on complaining. She might have reported him to the police, but of this he had no fear; peasants don't know their way in a big city.

Then the woman took her boy by the hand and left the agent's office. She was carrying her bundles on her back, and trudging along the street, weeping. Little Michail instinctively pulled her back, and uttered a shriek of horror. But it was too late — there she lay under the wheels of an electric car.

The little orphan-emigrant cried, blindly wading in the blood of his mother, and could not be calmed in the ambulance. A kind nurse managed to lay him to sleep, and when he awoke his mother had already been buried.

He cried long, calling for his mother, and breaking the heart of the good nurse. But finally, from exhaustion, he quieted down and fell asleep again. . . .

That was the first awkward turn in the little emigrant's destiny. He became the protégé of the kind nurse. But, again, that was not his good fortune. The nurse was called to war duty the same week, and she kissed him farewell like a mother, it is true. He was cast now upon the mercy of the hospital janitor, who allowed him a nook in his dwelling.

In ordinary times he might have got along splendidly as a mascot in the city hospital, receiving favors from the childless nurses, and having his meals at the

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hospital kitchen. But times were turbulent. The hospitals were overcrowded, nurses were scarce, and all overworked. Every hour riots occurred in the streets, and new bleeding, groaning bodies were rushed in. In the kitchen food was short, foodstuffs were being confiscated and carried off for the fighting armies. The nurses grudged every crumb of bread or spoonful of milk, that it might be for the sick. In such privation little Michail could not subsist on favors.

Already he had been drawn along in the immediate reaction to the Great war, and he was swept further into it. His destiny led him to become a factor in the Great war—one of the millions of tiny ones that make up the great fact. He fought no bloody battle, nor did he make his way by soliciting recruits; yet, we must admit, he was a little screw in that great machine of war. He sold patriotic post-cards on the street. “Two kopecks for the picture of His Highness, the Emperor Nicholas!” he called in the streets all day long, proffering to the restless crowds multi-colored photographs of the Russian monarch.

Many a beating he received on the streets, and many a lesson in life he learned in the course of his self-dependence. He made friends with some revolutionists, and they utilized him on a few occasions. The policemen on the streets he called by their first names, and always knew when one of them was slated by some revolutionist or other to be brought to the hospital with a cracked skull or broken rib. On one oc-

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casion he could have warned the policeman of the danger in store for him; but he cared not to do so, although he was truly sorry for the man.

He also learned to hate the Czar. He cursed him under his breath, spitting voluptuously. But he bore no malice against the pictures he was selling. On the contrary, he grew to like the daubs of bright color on the post-cards. He could not part from the paper rectangles. They became part of him.

So passed some time, indefinite to the boy. He grew hardened to his life, and day after day mechanically called out his wares. "Two kopecks for the picture of His Highness, the Emperor Nicholas! Two kopecks!" He had temporarily given up hope of ever seeing his father, until once it was suggested to him by one of his revolutionary friends that the American consul might do something for him. With his aggressive disposition the boy soon found himself at the American consulate, a bundle of pictures in one hand and the address of his father carefully sewed inside the lining of his coat-tail.

The American consul listened kindly to the boy's story and then, taking up a pad and pencil, asked him for his name.

"Michail Dobrowsky," replied Michail. "My father wrote that his name is now Dobrow — Fiodor is his first name."

"Ah!" exclaimed the consul suddenly, and opened a drawer in his desk. "Your father has already been searching for you and your mother. Here

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are orders I received from the Foreign Office to investigate your case." He looked down at the boy with evident satisfaction, and added: "Once again the United States has helped one of her adopted sons — Fiodor Dobrow this time. Well, well! At the first opportunity, my boy, you shall start for your father — and America."

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A great trans-atlantic liner landed at the New York harbor. There were many stories of the ship's dodging of submarines. But what made the safe arrival of the boat more interesting, was that on board arrived a few notables, including a variety actress with her dog, whose pictures (the dog's in full post-card plate) appeared on the front page in the noon editions of the newspapers. It was great news, and would have held "leader" place on the front pages, but for another tremendous event which occurred that same day, obscuring the liner's sea peril stories, in which the actress with the dog seemed to have played such a brave part. The overtopping event of news value was the explosion in an ammunition plant at the cost of over a hundred lives. So, eventually, in the Extra evening editions the full plate picture of the actress' dog was removed to the Entertainment page, to give space to the picture of a man with a bulldog jaw, who was the president of the corporation,



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and who might have been hurt were not his offices quite a distance from the factory buildings.

However, the list of the prominent names on the safely-arrived steamer continued to hold space in the columns of the newspapers. But where was the list of the hundred ammunition workers who had been blown to eternity in the "great" explosion? Was there not someone worth while amongst these? Alas, none, it would seem; no list of the dead appeared in print.

Yet, had there appeared such a list, one might have read that one of these victims was a certain Fiodor Dobrow, a naturalized American citizen. Of course, not many could know that exactly the very same day Fiodor was expecting his little son from Europe — they couldn't know that, because the name of little Michail Dobrowsky did not appear in the list of prominent arrivals, although, and coincidentally, he happened to be on board the steamer that had eluded the submarines.

This was more than an awkward turn in little Michail's destiny. It was the big tragedy of the little boy's life. Undoubtedly, it was the handiwork of Destiny, for in which comedy or tragedy is not Destiny the protagonist; yes, there lay the hand of Destiny, merciless.

Now, Fiodor Dobrow had never had even a look at his son, having left his wife before their child was born — and he had not lived to taste that joy. His

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little son was received at Ellis Island by a weeping, middle-aged woman, who was the dead man's sister. Her appearance was such that at once little Michail took pity on her.

His premonition proved true. His aunt was poor, a widow, and supported by two boys who were selling newspapers. She lived in a filthy cellar, and she kept bewailing the boy's ill luck and the loss of her dear brother. Little Michail, after his experience in Warsaw, was bored the first day, and demanded what could he do for a living — quite an American idea.

And now, once again, came a quirk of destiny in the life of the youthful immigrant. This time Fate would have it that once more his work should be in the agency of the Great war. Again he became, unconsciously, a tiny screw in the vast machine of war.

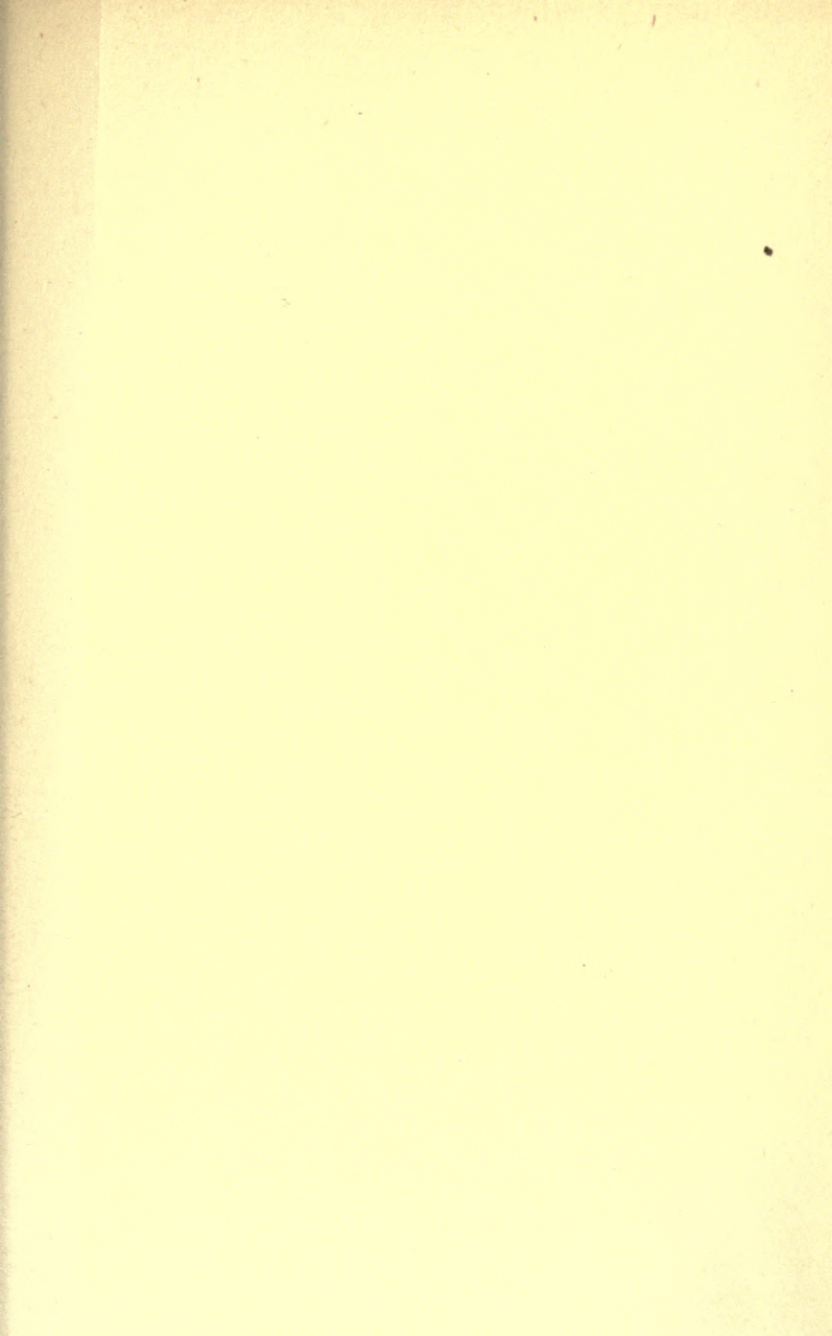
It was all very simple.

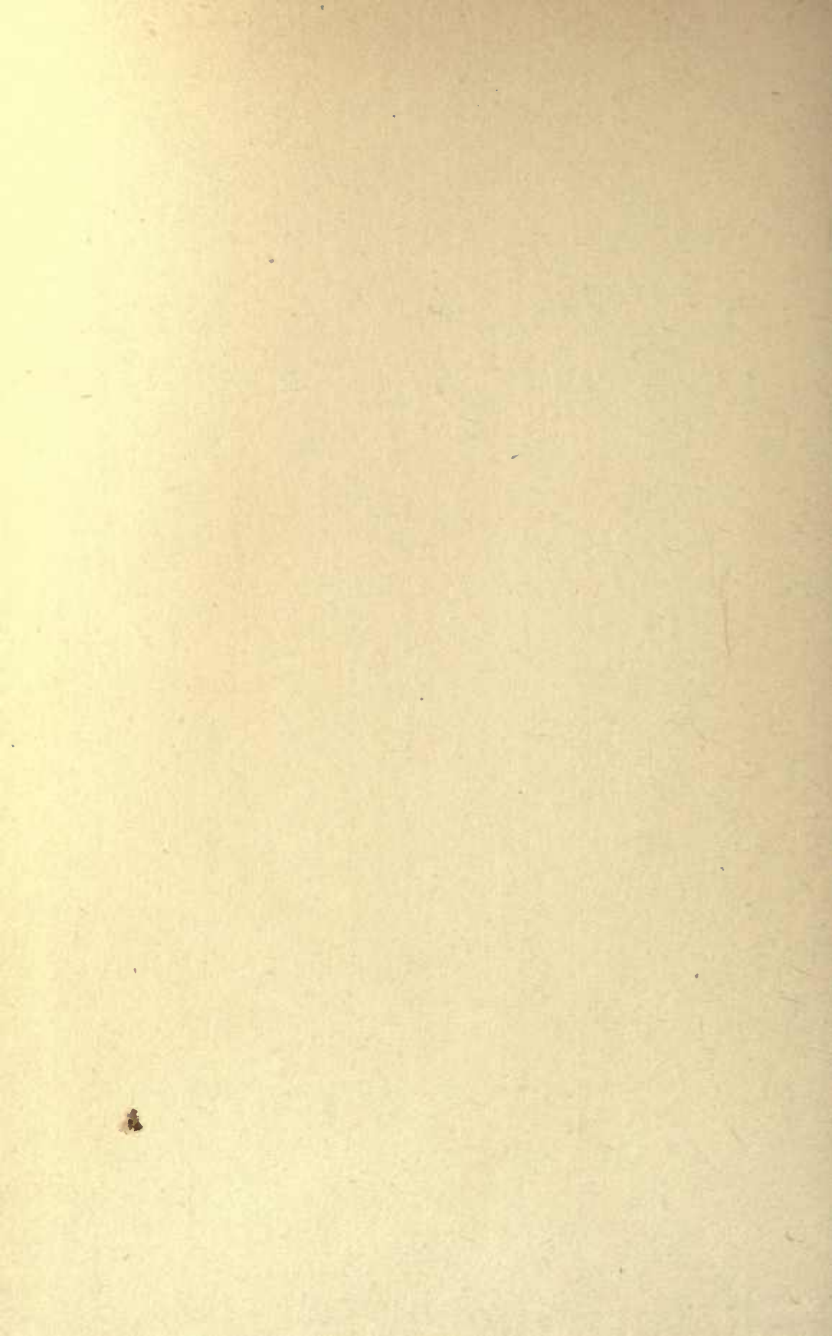
The United States had at last declared war. There was a rush for patriotic demonstration, and the most that people did at first towards that was to wear a flag-button in the lapels. Bedraggled boys at once appeared on the streets selling off all kinds of flags, pins and buttons with the "colors" on.

By virtue of their newspaper business little Michail's American cousins knew where these buttons were to be obtained for sale, and they secured a stock of them for Michail. They taught him how to pronounce his wares, and soon little Michail once again was engaged, for a livelihood, in the sale of war supplies.

## QUIPS OF DESTINY

He knew not the meaning of his words, but all day long he kept shouting: "Get your flag here for five cents! Show your colors! Old Glory, five cents!"







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